

11.
A SECOND
LETTER
TO THE

AUTHOR of a Pamphlet,

INTITLED,

CHRISTIANITY *not founded on*
Argument, &c.

In which that AUTHOR's Reasonings
from the *New Testament* are examined,

AND THE

Damnatory Sentence which the Gospel passes on
Unbelievers is largely vindicated, on Princi-
ples opposite to those which he has laid
down.

By P. DODDRIDGE, D. D. *V*

*Let GOD be true, but every Man a Lyar; as it is written,
That thou mightest be justified in thy Sayings, and mightest over-
come when thou art judged. Rom. iii. 4.*

Aut undique Religionem tolle, aut usquequaque conserva. Cic.

L O N D O N:

Printed for M. FENNER, at the *Turk's Head* in *Grace-
church-street*; and J. HODGES, at the *Looking-Glass*
over-against *St. Magnus Church, London-Bridge.*

MDCCXLIII.

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A SECOND

E. E. T. E. R.

AUTHOR OF "Saphael"

THE LITTLE WHITE HOUSE

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ADDITIONAL

A S E C O N D
L E T T E R
T O T H E

A U T H O R of a Pamphlet,

I N T I T L E D,

Christianity not founded on Argument, &c.

S I R,

THOUGH my *former Letter* considered what I thought *most essential* in your late Treatise, yet there are several other Things in it, which, however designed, have so plain a Tendency to *expose Christianity to Suspicion*, and even to *Contempt*, that on the Principles which led me to animadvert upon it before, I find myself obliged to give you this second Trouble.

I proceed therefore, without any farther Ceremony, to consider the Pains you have taken, under the *Second General Head* of your Tract, to represent the *Gospel* as pleading guilty to the Charge of *not being founded on Argument*; or in other Words, *not being generally capable* of such *rational Proof*, as its Disciples may be able to receive.

You would seem indeed, if one may judge by your Manner of introducing this Topick, to think this is doing great Kindness to the *New Testament*,

as it delivers it from the *Absurdity* of saying, “*Judge, whether you have Time, or not:—Judge, whether you are Judges, or not:—Judge all for yourselves, and yet judge all alike.*” (Pag. 35.) But I hope, Sir, before I have finished my Letter, to shew, that *all*, whom we can suppose to be concerned in any Demand of *judging*, i. e. all Persons of common Understanding, to whom the *Gospel* is, or has been, faithfully and intelligently preached, *can have no just Plea* from the *Want of Time, or Capacity*, and must, on the Supposition of an honest and diligent Enquiry, *all judge alike*, i. e. all agree in receiving it as a *Divine Revelation*.

To illustrate and confirm the View you have given of the Matter, you undertake to shew,—that *Christ* did not propose his Doctrines to *Examination*; (pag. 36,—38.)—that *his Apostles* had neither *Leisure*, nor *Qualifications*, for such a Method, i. e. for the Use of *Reasoning* and *Argument* in the Propagation of the *Gospel*; (pag. 38,—40.)—and that the very *Supposition* of such a Proceeding is evidently *preposterous* from the Nature of the Thing. (Pag. 41,—46.) In Opposition to all which, it is one of the easiest Tasks one can imagine, to shew,—that *Christ* did propose the great Doctrines he taught to *Examination*;—that the *Apostles* did the same, urging (as their Blessed Master had done,) most cogent *Arguments* in the Proof of them;—and that any other Method of Proceeding had been *preposterous*, and must necessarily have exposed the *Gospel* to the Contempt of all reasonable People. It seems hard indeed, to be put upon proving Things so conspicuous as these; and it cannot but be some *Trial of Temper* to one who honours and loves the *Gospel*, to see it, and its glorious Founders, placed in so *ridiculous a View*, as *that* in which your Assertions and Arguments represent them; that is, de-

scribed

Previous Remark on stating the Question. 5

scribed as *wild Enthusiasts*, running all over the World, at the Expence of their own Lives, to urge Men on Pain of Damnation to receive a Religion, for which they did not pretend to give them any Reason. But out of Respect both to you, and the Cause in which I am engaged, I will keep myself as calm as I can. And if some following Pages seem to my Reader unnecessary, I must beg him to distinguish between what was needful to inform him, and what was requisite to confute you.

But before I proceed to hint at the *Evident Proof* of the *Three Propositions*, which in Opposition to yours I have laid down above, I beg Leave to premise, that all you say on this Subject seems to me founded on an Artful and Sophistical *Shifting the Question*. The grand Matter in Debate is, whether Christianity is founded on rational Argument; or whether the only Cause, which a Professor of the Gospel can generally have to give for his Belief of it, must be, that God has immediately revealed it to him by his Spirit, and testified the Truth of it to him in a Manner, which as, on the one Hand, he cannot suspect, so on the other, he cannot communicate or explain? Instead of discussing this Question, you put off the Reader with another very different, (pag. 36.) Whether Christ and his Apostles submitted their Doctrine to Examination? which is a very ambiguous Manner of speaking: And when you assert that they did not, I must beg Leave to ask, what you mean by their Doctrine? Do you mean this general Doctrine, that they were Teachers sent from GOD? Or do you mean those particular Doctrines, which in Consequence of that general Assertion they proceeded to teach? If you mean the former, it is indeed to your Purpose; but, as I shall presently shew, is a Proposition entirely and notoriously false. But if you mean the latter, which the

6 *Christ brought rational Proofs of his Mission,*
the Course of your Arguments seems to imply,
then it is quite *foreign* to your Purpose: For *Christianity*
may be founded on rational Argument, tho' the
first Teachers of it, when they had proved their *Mis-*
sion, should have put the Credit of particular *Doc-*
trines on their own authorized Testimony alone, with-
out discussing the several Branches of their System,
in such a Manner as it would have been necessary
they should have done, had they proposed it only
as a *Theory*, destitute of *External Proofs*.

Now that our *Lord Jesus Christ* did not expect,
that it should be believed merely on his own *Testi-*
mony, that he was a *Teacher sent from GOD*, and
one whose *Doctrine* was consequently true and divine,
but set himself to prove it, is so evident from the
History of the Evangelists, that I believe few Readers
need so much as to be reminded of particular Passages
on this Head. No Words can be more express
than those, in which he has disclaimed this. If
(says he,) *I bear Testimony of my self alone, my Testi-*
mony is not true or valid; but my Father who hath sent
me, he beareth Testimony to me.^a And you well know,
that he illustrated and argued this *Testimony of the*
Father, partly from the *Predictions* of those *Sacred*
Writings which they acknowledged to be the *Word*
of GOD, in which *Jesus* declared he was described
and foretold; and partly from the *Attestation of*
John, whom they generally acknowledged to be
a divinely inspired *Prophet*; but principally, from
a yet more sensible Argument than either, *the*
Works which the Father had given him to perform,
and which (said he,) *bear Witness of me.*^b And all
these he represents as illustrated by the excellent
Design and Tendency of his Preaching, to which he
plainly refers, when he says, *The Word which I have*
spoken, shall judge the Unbeliever another Day.^c

These

^a John v. 31, 37. ^b John v. 36. ^c John xii. 48.

These were various and cogent *Arguments*; some of them so very *plain*, that one single Day, or Hour, might make a Man Master of them: I mean, *that* arising from his *miraculous Powers*, and the *Tendency of his Doctrine* to promote real Goodness. The Argument from *John's Testimony* was, even by the Confession of his Enemies, known to all the Nation; and as for *that from Prophecy*, he submitted it to their candid and deliberate *Examination*, urging them to *search the Scriptures*, and assuring them that if they did so, they would there find a convincing *Testimony concerning him*,^d which was to shine with growing Evidence. And on the whole, he expostulates with them, in Language utterly irreconcilable with your Scheme; *And why even of yourselves*, from plain Appearances, and without farther Explications and Remonstrances from me, *judge you not that which is right?* pleading that *the Signs of the Times*, marking them out to be those of the *Messiah*, were as discernable as any of those *Prognostications of the Weather*, which all the World had observed, and formed into common *Proverbs*.^e So that, in Consequence of all, *their continued Unbelief*, in the Midst of so many united *Testimonies* and palpable *Proofs*, was not only an *irrational and criminal*, but a most *inexcusable* Thing. *If I had not* (says he,) *come and spoken unto them, and done among them the Works which no other Man did*, tho' their Disobedience to the Law of God had been justly punishable, yet, in Comparison of their present Case, *they had not had Sin; but now, they have no Cloak for their Sin*.^f Could they have pleaded, as you, Sir, it seems would have taught them to do, "We never had any *Reason* offered to bring "us to believe;" I suppose, it would have been no despicable *Cloak* for their *Infidelity*. I cannot forbear

^d John v. 39.

^e Luke xii. 56, 57. and Matt. xvi. 2, 3.

^f John xv. 22, 24.

bear saying, that it is a grievous Outrage upon the *Character* of our blessed *Redeemer*, to suppose him capable of talking in so wild, so false, and so inconsistent a Manner, as this wretched *Hypothesis* would imply. I should have too great a Respect for the Memory of *Socrates*, to advance, or admit, any Thing so injurious to it.

That the *Apostles* also *reasoned* in the Defence of their *Mission*, is just as certain, as that they preached and wrote; and indeed the *Fifth Book* of the *New Testament* is almost as much the *History* of their *Reasonings*, as of their *Acts*. The *Second Chapter* contains an Account of their *Reasoning* at *Jerusalem*, from the *Fact* of the miraculous *Descent of the Holy Ghost* upon them, in Comparison with the *Predictions* of the *Old Testament*, both with Respect to *that*, and to the *Resurrection of Jesus*; from whence they strongly infer, that *all the House of Israel* might know assuredly, that *GOD* had made that same *Jesus* whom they had crucified, both *Lord and Christ*.^g The *Third, Fourth, and Fifth Chapters* relate their *Reasonings* before the *People* and the *Sanhedrim*, from the *Cure of the Lame Man in the Temple*, as wrought in the Name of *Jesus of Nazareth*, whom they had crucified.^h And it would be tedious, rather than necessary, to continue the Enumeration of particular Passages, in which we read of *Paul's Reasoning* in Confirmation of these great Points; as we are told he did at *Damascus*,ⁱ at *Jerusalem*,^k at *Antioch in Pisidia*,^l and particularly at *Thessalonica*, where when his *Reasoning with the Jews out of the Scriptures* for *three successive Sabbaths* is spoken of, it is said to have been *as his Manner was*.^m You cannot but know, that as he continued this Practice at *Berea*, the *Inhabitants* of that Place are greatly commended, for

^g Acts ii. 36. ^h iii. 12,—16. iv. 10. ⁱ ix. 22. ^k ix. 28, 29. ^l xiii. 16,—41. ^m xvii. 2, 3.

as appears from their Manner of Preaching. 9
 for examining the Force of his Arguments, and
searching the Scriptures daily, whether those Things were
*so.*ⁿ His Reasoning with the Philosophers at Athens,^o
 from Natural Principles, to demonstrate the *Absur-*
dity of Image Worship, is so conclusive and so noble,
 that I cannot suppose it to have escaped your No-
 tice or Memory. I am sorry to be under a Ne-
 cessity of reminding you, that at *Corinth*, where he
continued for a Year and a half, he *reasoned in the Sy-*
agogue every Sabbath,^p at least for a considerable
 Part of that Time; that at *Ephesus*, he *preached in*
the Synagogue, for the Space of three Months, disputing and
persuading the Things concerning the Kingdom, of GOD;^q
 and after this, having *separated the Disciples*, he *disputed*
daily in the School of one Tyrannus, continuing this
 Practice for the Space of two Years;^r that he made
 his Defence with great Presence of Mind, before
 the *Jews at Jerusalem*;^s that he *reasoned with Felix*
of Righteousness, Temperance, and Judgment to come,
 in such a Manner that he *made him tremble*,^t and
pleaded with such Strength of Argument before
Agrippa, that he *almost persuaded him to be a Chri-*
stian.^u And the History closes with an Account of
 his appointing a Day to the *Jews at Rome*, in which
 they attended him at his Lodging, and he *expounded*
and testified the Kingdom of GOD, persuading them con-
cerning Jesus, both out of the Law, and out of the
Prophets, from Morning till Evening.^w What the
 Force and Validity of these Reasonings was, is not
 at all the Question between us: It is sufficient, that
 the Passages referred to demonstrate, that Reason-
 ings were used, and Objections heard, directly con-
 trary to what you, Sir, have been pleased to assert,
 (pag. 39.) with as much Confidence, as if you had
 never read these Passages, or never expected that

B

what

ⁿ Acts xvii. 11. ^o xvii. 22,—31. ^p xviii. 4, 11. ^q xix.
 8. ^r xix. 9, 10. ^s xxii. 1,—21. ^t xxiv. 25. ^u xxvi. 2,
 —28. ^w xxviii. 23.

10 *They wanted not Time or Qualifications,*

what you have written should be compared with the *Records* to which you appeal.

It is equally easy to shew, that the *Apostles* reason in their *Epistles*; and with what Force, many valuable *Commentators* have shewn at large. But as it would be out of my Way to consider those *Reasonings* now, I content myself with mentioning one Passage, as a *Specimen* of many more: *I speak as unto Wise Men, judge ye what I say*^x. A Text, in which there seems to be a *Spring*, that will not easily bend to your Interpretation. But the whole *New Testament* is so full of *Reasonings*, that it is quite superfluous to enumerate Particulars.

Now when these Things are thus evident in Fact, it signifies little to say, that the *Apostles* had not *Time*, or *Qualifications*, to maintain an Argument; and that in the *Nature of Things* it would have been preposterous for them to have attempted it. If what you say on these *Topicks* (pag. 38, — 45.) were conclusive, when compared with what I have produced above, the *Conclusion* would be something very different from what you professedly labour to establish: — It would shew, that the *Apostles* acted in an irrational and preposterous Manner. But I am in no Pain for their Reputation on this Head, in Consequence of any Thing which you have asserted; for all your *Reasonings* are built on a Forgetfulness, or Misrepresentation, of those *Topicks of Argument*, on which the *Apostles* laid the great Stress of their Cause.

It is very true, that many curious and subtil Questions in *Pneumatology*, *Metaphysics*, and *Ethicks*, might have been connected with some Articles which the *Apostles* taught; and a whole Life might have been spent in canvassing all that a disputatious Caviller might have objected. It was indeed beneath

^x 1 Cor. x. 15.

considering what their Arguments were. II

neath the Dignity of an *Apostle's Character*, and inconsistent with his important *Work*, to unravel all these *Cobwebs*, Thread by Thread. Yet GOD was pleased to furnish them with the *proper and rational Means* of sweeping them away, as it were, at once. *Inspiration* could, no doubt, have furnished them for a minute Discussion of every artful *Sophism*, and have taught them to range *Metaphysical Arguments* with an Accuracy far exceeding that of *Aristotle*: But the Generality of Mankind was not capable of entering into such *Curiosities*; and therefore it was an Instance of great Wisdom and Goodness in the great Author of our Religion, to furnish them with a much nobler Kind of *Arguments*, equally convincing to all candid and upright Minds, which might soon be set in a very strong and easy Light. And accordingly they insisted upon these. — They asserted, that GOD, having sent *Christ* into the World to be a Divine Teacher, raised him from the Dead, after he had been cruelly slain by wicked and incorrigible Men; that, quickly after this, he received him into Heaven, from whence he had sent down upon them an extraordinary *Divine Influence*, to instruct them in the Truth, and to enable them to preach it to the World in a very convincing Manner: In Consequence of which, Men were no longer under a Necessity of investigating *Divine Truths* by the slow Progress of *Philosophical Argumentation*; but were to come, with humble Simplicity of Soul, to hear and receive what GOD by them taught concerning himself, and his Son, and the Way of obtaining final and eternal *Happiness*. — They never expected, that so important and comprehensive an Assertion should be taken on the Credit of their own Word; But to shew, that GOD was indeed with them, and that he himself taught Mankind by them, they wrought such *Miracles* as sensibly demonstrated his extraordinary Presence and

12 *Their Testimony was sufficiently confirmed,*

Agency. — And that this might appear a Scheme, long since formed in the Divine Mind, and intimated to Men long before it opened upon them, they produced Passages in the *Antient and Sacred Books* of the *Jews*, in which their *Prophets* had plainly described *this Jesus* as the *Messiah*, and marked out various Particulars, which had an evident Accomplishment in him; waving *many other Predictions*, which could not so easily be ascertained and illustrated at that Time, tho' future Ages and Occurrences have made them very considerable to us. — The *Apostles* also urged, or frequently referred to, the excellent *Tendency of their Doctrine* to promote real Virtue and Goodness in the World, and the happy *Influence* it had on those who sincerely entertained it, which made the *Acceptance or Rejection* of it a *Test of Characters*; as they often intimate, and sometimes expressly assert, that it was.^y And from all these Things, which were plain and evident, they most rationally inferred the *Obligation*, which their Hearers were under, to *submit themselves* to those *Doctrines, Laws, and Institutions of Christ*, which they as his authorized Messengers brought them, and to *adhere to his Cause* whatever it might cost them. And all this they confirmed by *communicating* to great Numbers of their *new Converts* different *Gifts and Operations of the Holy Ghost*, that produced sensible Effects; which might also tend to *convince others*, that the Doctrine they had received was Supernatural and Divine.

These

^y Compare Rom. i. 16,—18. vi. 17,—22. viii. 2, 4, xii. 2. 1 Cor. vi. 9,—11. 2 Cor. iii. 1, 2. iv. 2, 3. Gal. v. 18,—24. Eph. ii. 1,—3, 10,—12. iv. 17,—24. v. 6,—14. Phil. ii. 15, 16. Col. i. 4,—6, 9,—13, 21, 22. iii. 4,—10. 1 Theff. ii. 1,—10. v. 5,—8. 2 Theff. i. 3,—10. 1 Tim. i. 5. Tit. ii. 9,—14. 1 Pet. i. 14,—22. iv. 2,—6. 2 Pet. i. 3, 4. 1 John i. 5,—7. ii. 4, 5, 29. iii. 6,—10. iv. 5, 6, 12. v. 1,—5, 19. 2 John 1, 2, 6.

and competent Time allowed to examine it. 13

These Particulars constituted, what one may call the *Apostolick Demonstration*; and they allowed their Hearers *a competent Time to examine it*. It is true indeed, the *Time* and *Labour* of these holy Men were of too great Importance, to permit them to make a *long Stay* in Places, where the Inhabitants would not so much as receive them, nor give them an *Hearing*: Nor would the *mild* and *peaceful* Genius of their *Religion* allow them to endeavour, even by *Miracle*, to *force their Continuance* in any Place, from which the *Magistrates* and *People* joined to *expel them*. In Cases of this Nature alone, they were directed to quit them, with that striking Circumstance, which you so much misrepresent, of *shaking off the Dust of their Feet*, in Token of their looking on such *Despisers* as devoted to certain Destruction. But yet in other Places, where any of their *Hearers* desired *their Stay*, and the *Rulers* permitted it, they *abode a while* with them; and if we may judge of the Conduct of others by that of the *Apostle Paul*, who seems one of the most active and itinerant of them all, *that Stay* sometimes extended to *Months*, and sometimes to *Years*. During this Time they were, so far as we can learn by the *New Testament*, willing to *dispute publickly* with all Opposers, and to *answer any Objections* which could be urged against the Truth of their Doctrine, and the Authority of their Mission, whether by *Jews* or *Gentiles*. And if, which we have no Reason to imagine a common Case, they sometimes *cut short the Debate*, by inflicting on perverse Opponents *miraculous Judgments*, those Punishments carried a *rational Conviction* of the Authority of the *Apostles*: But I recollect no Instance of *a Miracle of this Kind* on such an Occasion, but that of *Elymas the Jewish Sorcerer*,^z who probably *opposed the Gospel*, either by *lying Wonders*, or by *Misrepresentations* of the Old Testa-

^z Acts xiii. 6, — 11.

14 *These Things account for their Success.*

Testament, of which a *Roman Governor* could not easily judge: On either of which Suppositions, there would be a remarkable Propriety in this extraordinary Step; in which Instance, by the Way, great Gentleness was intermixed with the apparent Severity, as it was only for a Season he was deprived of his Sight.

If in Cases, and with Proofs like these, *Thousands* were converted at a single Lecture, as you express it, it is certainly to be ascribed to the *Validity of their Arguments*, in Concurrence with the Operation of *GOD's Spirit*, to subdue their Prejudices, and make them willing cordially to embrace, and courageously to confess the *Truth*; of which, many who did not profess it, were no doubt in their Consciences inwardly convinced. Yet I cannot think after all, that its Success on the *Day of Pentecost*, where so many peculiar Circumstances occurred, is to be looked upon as a Specimen of the *Rapidity* with which it commonly prevailed.

This, Sir, appears to me a *just Representation* of the Case: *That* which you have been pleased to make, in the *Pages* last referred to, is very different; and I apprehend, it will be easy to shew, there are *two material Errors* which attend it. It supposes the Case to be determined *much more difficult* than it really was, and the *Assent* universally required *much more immediate*. And as these *two palpable Fallacies* run thro' several other Passages of your Book, I must take the Liberty to examine them a little more particularly.

You represent the *Question* concerning the *Truth of Christianity*, as taught by the *Apostles*, to have been *much more difficult* than it really was. “ *Eter-*
“ *nal Relations, moral Differences of Things*, and a
“ *precise Delineation of the Religion of Nature and*
“ *its*

The Case not so difficult, as to the Jews. 15

“ *its Obligations*, were all ” not only material, but, (as you say in pag. 42.) “ *indispensable Articles* to “ be treated of in the Way, and inculcated as “ the Foundation of such a Superstructure.” Now here I would *first* observe, that so far as the *Jews* were concerned in this Matter, a great Part of these *preliminary Controversies* was quite superseded. They already believed, that there was *One GOD*, the supreme Lord of all, whose *Law* required *universal Virtue*, and had denounced an awful *Curse* against every Instance of wilful and presumptuous *Disobedience*: They likewise believed, that in various preceding Ages *this GOD* had raised up *Prophets*, with *miraculous Powers*, first to introduce, and afterwards to confirm, the *Religion* which they professed: And they were also fully perswaded, that the *Messiah* was to appear, about that Time, to establish the Cause of *GOD* and of *Righteousness* in the World. To such the *Apostles* presented themselves, as *Messengers* from the *GOD* of their *Fathers*; turned them to Passages of their own *Sacred Books*, in which the *Sufferings* as well as the *Triumphs* of the *Messiah* were evidently foretold; and shewed them, by the Account they gave of *Christ*, confirmed by the *Miracles* which they wrought in his *Name*, that they must submit to his *Authority*, on the very same Principles on which *that* of *Moses* was acknowledged by them; and that they must *hearken to him*, or, according to the Testimony of *Moses* himself, must expect to be cut off from among the *People*.^a

Where *Idolatrous Gentiles* were to be addressed to, there was indeed a *greater Difficulty*; yet it was by no Means equal to what you, Sir, would represent. Bad as they were, they had not lost all *Distinction* between *Virtue* and *Vice*, nor all *Notion* of a *Supreme Governor* of the World. The *Popular Religion* received

^a Acts iii. 22, 23.

16 *The Gentiles had enough to convince them*

ceived among them was so flagrantly *absurd*, as to admit of being easily exposed. And when they heard that *those Vices*, which contrary to the Light of their own Consciences they indulged themselves in, exposed them to the *Divine Displeasure*; and saw such sensible *Proofs* of his Presence and Power, as the *Miracles of the Apostles* afforded, *Proofs* so unparalleled and so striking; *that Principle of Conscience* which God had implanted in their Natures, and to which their *own Writers* bear an abundant Testimony, would probably be *alarmed*; and there could be no need of a long Deduction of *Philosophical Arguments* to convince those of them, who had not imbibed *Philosophical Prejudices*, or were not incorrigibly *hardened in their Immoralities*, that such Kind of *Teachers* deserved to be attentively heard. They would evidently see, that *GOD was with them*, a God far superior to, and quite different from, those *indolent inactive Deities* which they had been taught to adore. And it needs no great Labour to convince a Man's Understanding, that when the *Lord of Nature speaks*, he should *hear and obey*.* In Consequence of this, as soon as the *Gentiles* heard

* Dr. Stebbing in his late *Sermon* before the *Society for the Propagation of the Gospel*, has especially considered the *Miracles of the Apostles* "as an Application to the *Fears* of Men, as "under the special Notice of God, and liable to his Correction." And it is certain, they did prove that Men are so; yet I cannot think it the *Primary Intention* of these *Miracles* to impress *Terror*, for this plain Reason, that they were generally of the *beneficent Kind*. It seems therefore, they were *immediate Proofs* of the *Presence* and *Agency* of an almighty and most gracious GOD, who pitying the sad State of his degenerate Offspring, the Children of Men, had sent them a *Sovereign Medicine* for their *Souls*, proved chiefly, and with great Propriety, by *miraculous Cures* wrought upon their *Bodies*. Yet as these *Messages of Mercy* were attended with awful *Threatnings* of severe *Punishments*, in Case of continued *Impenitence* and *Disobedience*, the *Display of his Power* in these Works of abused Mercy would in a very solemn and affecting Manner *inforce those Threatnings*.

heard *one Discourse* of the *Apostles*, as soon as they saw a *single Miracle*, or heard the probable Report of it, they had Reason to pause, and to set themselves seriously to enquire into this *new Doctrine*: And if they did so, then *supposin*^o, as we must here suppose, that *Facts* were as the *New Testament* represents, it is impossible but they must have *stronger Reasons* to receive the *Gospel*, than they could have to reject it. Ignorant as they were of the *true Principles* of *Natural Religion*, they could not be able at first to discern the Force of *that Argument* for the *Truth of Christianity*, which arises from its *Agreement* with *those Principles*: But that it was *proposed* and *attested* by him, who evidently appeared to be the great *Sovereign of the World*, they might immediately see, by those *Instances*, in which the stable *Laws of Nature* were controlled in Subserviency to it. And they must also see, as soon as they heard the *Plan*, that it was admirably calculated, by *strong Motives* before entirely unknown, to make Men *honest, benevolent, and temperate*; Virtues, which have always been *esteemed* among *Heathens*, how little soever they have been *practised*. And having embraced it, they would come to have juster and more extensive Notions of the Beauty and Glory of its *Internal Evidences*, as their *Experimental Acquaintance* with it increased, and their *Understandings* improved with their *Graces*.

This, I hope, may make it evident, that it was not *so difficult* a Thing, as you suppose, for those to whom the *Apostles* addressed, to enter into some *Rational Proofs of Christianity*. I must now add, that the *Assent* which these *Divine Teachers* demanded, was not *so immediate* as you represent it to have been. You say indeed, "There were no
" *Concessions of Time* for Doubt or Deliberation;
" *one Declaration* of the Terms of the Covenant was

18 *The Case was different, as to the Scornful,*

“ often thought sufficient; the least *Standing-off*
“ gave up the Unbeliever to *Reprobation*;—they
“ must comply without the least *Hesitation*,” and
the like. (*Pag. 38, 39.*) Now I own, that if frequent *positive Assertions* could pass for *Proofs*, the Point would be clearly demonstrated on your Side of the Question. But I think, the whole History of the *Acts*, and many Things in the *Epistles* too, lead us to consider the Matter in a very different Light.

The Man indeed, who, on viewing *such Credentials* as I have mentioned, and hearing so much of the Gospel as in one Hour he might learn, should on the Force of preconceived *Prejudices*, whether *Speculative* or *Practical*, refuse to give it any farther *Consideration*, and, as some of the Wits of Athens did, answer merely with *Scorn* and *Ridicule*, might justly be left to perish in his Delusions. And if *this* were the Case universally in any City or Town into which the *Apostles* came, (which one would hope it seldom was,) the *Apostles* must of Course leave them, and not force themselves on those who rejected their Pretensions with *Disdain*. But if others received them, they generally (as I observed before,) made some Stay at a Place; and as they continued to teach and dispute publicly, those who at first derided, might if they pleased hear them again and again: And I can see no Argument to prove, that any Degree of *Contempt* or *Opposition*, with which any of them had at first rejected the Gospel, would seal them up under *Reprobation*, if they afterwards came to a better Temper.

If these very Men, as well as any others; expressed a Desire of being farther instructed; if they urged their remaining Doubts, not as with a proud *Disposition* to cavil and insult, but as Persons that desired farther rational Satisfaction, that they might act as in the Sight of God, and as answerable to him in
a Point

a Point of so great Importance; and if they attended these Enquiries with *Prayers* for farther *Divine Illumination*, which both the Principles of the *Jewish Revelation*, and of *Natural Religion*, might easily have taught them; *Light* would gradually break in upon their Minds, and they would know, if they followed on to know the Lord. I challenge you, Sir, to produce any one Line in the *New Testament*, that intimates the *Apostles* would discourage such Persons as these; on the contrary, that Humanity and Gentleness, that Meekness and Humility, which every where appear in their Conduct and Writings, and for which they so justly celebrate their great Master, would no doubt teach them to treat such Enquirers tenderly and kindly, and to cherish them as *hopeful Persons*, who were not far from the Kingdom of GOD. A little Time would probably lead a candid upright Mind thro' its Difficulties, amidst so many shining Evidences, which must impress and convince, in Proportion to the Attention with which they were viewed. And if the publick Concerns of the Churches did require the *Apostles*, as they possibly might, to quit such modest and humble Enquirers as these, before they arrived at full Satisfaction; they would, in every Place where they had planted a *Christian Church*, leave Persons behind them, furnished with *miraculous Gifts*, who might build on the Foundation they had laid, and compleat the Work which they had begun, in such honest and teachable Souls.

There might indeed be a third Sort of Persons, whose State was a *Medium* between that of these, and of the *Scorners* we mentioned before: I mean, such as were indolent about the Matter; neither positively perswaded that *Christianity* was false, nor quite convinced that it was true, nor solicitous to bring their Doubts to an Issue; but concluding, that whether it were true or false, they might find

20 *Consideration of the Proof from Miracles.*

out a Path to Happiness without it. This was probably the Case of *many then*, as it undoubtedly is the Case of *many in our Days*. Now such as *these* were *not* to be looked upon as *fair Enquirers*, but as *Triflers* in the most serious of all Affairs; and as acting the most absurd and inconsistent Part: For as *Christianity* pretended to be a Matter of the *utmost Importance*, in neglecting it they acted as if it were assuredly *false*, while yet they confessed that they knew not but it might be *true*. A Conduct, which was rendered especially *inexcusable* by that *grand Apparatus*, with which Providence interposed to introduce it, which if it proved any Thing at all concerning it, must prove it to be of *infinite Moment*. Persons of the *Sceptical Turn*, which you know, Sir, to have been very common among the *Antients*, might perhaps sometimes *amuse themselves* with proposing their Doubts to *Christian Teachers*, as they came in their Way; but it is not to be wondered, if they lived and died in this *wavering State*, which was indeed a State of Folly and of Vice, and no doubt ended accordingly. But I cannot find a Line in the *New Testament*, which should lead one to suspect, that they would ever have it to plead before the Tribunal of God, that they were *condemned*, for *rejecting the Gospel*, before they had *Time* to look into its Proofs, tho' honestly and seriously disposed to have done it.

I have in the whole Course of this Argument mentioned *Miracles*, as awakening and convincing *Proofs* of a *Divine Mission*, without any particular Regard to what you have insinuated to the contrary. (*Pag. 46,—50.*) But now, Sir, I shall give it such a Notice as I think it requires; which will be the less, as you seem to lay but very little Stress on it yourself, and write, so far as I can judge by what follows, in a Consciousness of the Weakness of
your

your own *Objections*. You say, “ they were not
“ meant as *Arguments*, but were *natural Effects* of
“ *Gospel-Benevolence* ;—and plead their being used
“ by *Impostors* ;—that *Care* was often taken to keep
“ them private ;—and that the *Seeking them* was dis-
“ couraged.” All which you would seem to think incon-
sistent with their being *Proofs*, especially *important Proofs*
of the *Truth* of the *Revelation*. The *New Testament*,
that grand Magazine of Weapons for the Defence
of *Christianity*, furnishes me with such easy *Answers*
to all these Suggestions, that my only Fear is, lest
the Reader should be wearied with the Illustration
of Things in themselves so plain, as what I have
to advance in direct Contradiction to all these In-
sinuations of yours.

That the *Miracles* which *Christ* and his *Apostles*
performed, were really intended by him and them,
as *Proofs* of a *Divine Mission*, is so plain from the
Appeals made to them, and the *Stress* laid upon
them, that it would be quite superfluous to dilate
upon it here, especially after what *Bp. Fleetwood*,
Dr. Chapman, and *Mr. Chandler* have so judiciously
urged on this Head. Nor need any Reader who
has not had the Pleasure of an Acquaintance
with those learned and accurate Writers, go any
farther than the *Texts* I have thrown into the *Mar-
gin* to prove it beyond Debate.^b So that the Ten-
dency of your remaining *Objection* must be only to
shew the *Argument*, which *Christ* and his *Apostles* most
largely insisted upon, to be *inconclusive*, and the
Stress laid on it *unreasonable*. How far the Prosecution
of this Design is consistent with the warm Zeal you
profess for the *Gospel*, it is not worth while particu-
larly

^b John v. 36. x. 24, 25, 37, 38. xiv. 11. xv. 24.
Mark ii. 10. xvi. 20. Mat. xi. 4, 5, 20,—24. Acts ii. 22.
x. 38. xiv. 3. Heb. ii. 4.

22 *Not natural Effects of Gospel-Benevolence.*

larly to urge. I cannot see what its greatest Enemy could say, more directly tending to subvert it.

You assert, in a Manner which I confess surprises me, “ that *Miracles* were but the *Natural Effect* of their *Doctrine*, instead of any *Supernatural Proof* of its *Veracity*.” (Pag. 47.) I acknowledge myself quite at a Loss, to find out the Sense of this extraordinary Passage. By a *Miracle* we generally mean a *Supernatural Event*: Now I cannot conceive, how this should be in any Case, the *natural Effect* of any *Doctrine*, be it ever so Divine, or ever so important. But if there were a *Doctrine*, whose *natural Effect* it was, to endow its Professors or Teachers with a Power of performing *such Operations* as *Christ* and his *Apostles* did, it would surely be a *Proof of its Veracity* convincing beyond all Dispute or Comparison. However, we know not of any *such Doctrine*; nor can we conceive of any necessary *Connection* between the Knowledge of *Truth*, and a Power of *such Performances*. I suppose therefore your Meaning must be, that when a Person was endowed with these *miraculous Powers*, the *Exertion* of them would be what so benevolent a Religion as *Christianity* would naturally prompt him to, even tho’ he should not intend by it to demonstrate the *Truth* of that *Doctrine*. But when the Passage above is thus explained, which after all I can but guess to be your Meaning in it; I would intreat you, Sir, to shew us, what *Inconsistency* there is between these *two Views*, which you have so strangely opposed to each other. Would it not be a glorious *Proof* of a *Divine Mission*, that God gave to *Christ* and his *Apostles* a Power of exercising their *Benevolence* in so extraordinary a Manner? Would not *Miracles* of a *benevolent Kind* appear the most congruous *Proofs* of so *benevolent a Scheme*? And would not *Miracles* intended as *Proofs* of a *Divine Mission*

Concealing them is grossly misrepresented. 23

Mission be equally an Exercise of *Benevolence*; nay indeed, would they not be much more eminently so, than if no Reference to that *Mission* had been intended? Surely an unprejudiced Mind must see the View you are guarding against, to be the *Crown* and *Glory* of the whole. By *curing* a painful and dangerous *Disease*, by *opening the Eyes of the Blind*, and the like, to lead the afflicted Creature into the Way of *Truth* and *Duty*, and so into the Way of *Salvation*; and by his Means to instruct every Spectator, every one who heard the credible Attestation of the Fact; must enhance the Benefit beyond all Expression; extending it to a far greater Variety of Subjects, and, if it were duly improved, producing in each a far superior Degree of Happiness, than the *Cure alone* could afford to the Person who was the Subject of it.

That *Christ* took Care to *conceal* some of his *Miracles*, is indeed apparent; which, to be sure, was to avoid Ostentation, and to prevent the People from rising tumultuously in his Favour: And that he *silenced the Devils* who bore Witness to him, was an evident Instance of his Wisdom, to cut off every Colour for the malicious and blasphemous Charge advanced against him as a *Confederate* with them. But you well know, that many of *our Lord's Miracles* were wrought in a most publick Manner; some in the Streets of *Jerusalem*, and many more *before vast Multitudes* who were crouding around him, in the Fields, and the Mountains. This is notorious. And give me Leave, Sir, seriously to express my *Astonishment*, how you could venture to say, in the Face of such obvious Evidence to the contrary, “that *our Lord* was always remarkably *on the Reserve*” “in this Respect, whenever he happened among” “unbelieving Company.” (*Pag. 48.*) A known Falseness, liable to Conviction in the Eyes of the whole

24 *Christ often wrought his Miracles in publick.*

whole World, is what I am very unwilling to charge upon a Gentleman and a Scholar, tho' ever so unacquainted with his Person, and Character. I will therefore impute *this*, and some other Passages of this Kind, to mere Inattention and Forgetfulness. But permit me, Sir, to say; that you ought to have read the *New Testament* with more Accuracy, and to have fixed the Contents of it more deeply in your Mind, before you had thrown out so many publick Reflections upon it. How must it surprize and pain you, to be told from thence, and to see how plainly it is there asserted, that *our Lord* not only *cast out Devils* before the *Pharisees*, who charged him as a Confederate of *Belzeebub*^c with that very *Miracle* before their Eyes; but likewise, that the *Paralytick* was healed in *Capernaum*, while *there were Pharisees and Doctors of the Law sitting by, who were come out of every Town of Galilee, and Judea, and Jerusalem*;^d when the *Power of the Lord* was also present to heal several more, and the *Croud* was so great, that the Friends of the *Paralytick* were obliged to take a very peculiar Method to get him laid before *Jesus*! How you could fail to know this, or knowing could forget it, is strange: As also, how it should have escaped your Notice or Memory, that *Lazarus* was raised before a great *Multitude* of People, some of which were the Friends of the chief *Priests*, and *Pharisees*:^e Or that a few Days before *our Lord's* Death, when it was no longer necessary to use such Precautions as he had formerly done, *the Blind and the Lame* came to him in the *Temple*, and he healed them; and the chief *Priests* and *Scribes* saw the wonderful Things that he did.^f

But to dismiss a Head, on which I could not have wished that you should have given me such
Advan-

^c Mat. ix. 33, 34. ^{xii.} 22, 24. ^d Luke v. 17, — 19.
^e John xi. 31, — 46. ^f Mat. xxi. 14, 15.

Advantages, I must just touch upon your other *Objection* against the Validity of the *Argument from Miracles*, taken from *Christ's rebuking* those that *sought them*. In some Circumstances, it is evident that he did: But all that we can infer from hence is, that there were some Circumstances, in which they were *unreasonably demanded*. Thus for Instance, when he had *in the Presence of Multitudes*, (who are, by the Way, expressly distinguished from *his Disciples*,) *healed the Lame, the Blind, the Dumb, and the Maimed, and MANY OTHERS*, who had been *cast down at his Feet*; ^g and after that, had *fed four thousand, with seven Loaves, and a few small Fishes*; ^h we are immediately told, that the *Pharisees and Sadducees came tempting him, and demanded that he should shew them a Sign from Heaven*; ⁱ thereby insolently taking upon them to prescribe to God himself, *what Kind of Miracles* they would have wrought for their Conviction. On this he very justly called them *a wicked and adulterous Generation*, and referred them (with greater Propriety than most *Commentators* have been aware,) to the grand *Miracle* of his *Resurrection*, ^k which was attended with a most illustrious *Sign from Heaven*; the *Descent of an Angel*, in the Sight of the *Roman Soldiers*, who guarded the *Sepulchre*; which they themselves testified to the *Jewish Rulers*, ^l and perhaps to some of these very Persons who now presumed on so unreasonable a Demand. — He elsewhere blames those, who *would not believe, unless they saw Signs and Wonders*; ^m that is, who would not yield to the most credible *Testimony of others*, tho' the Witnesses were ever so numerous and worthy of Belief, unless they had *that of their own Senses* added to the rest. — It is very probable, some very indecent Things had been said by his Enemies while *questioning with his Disciples*, to occasion

D sion

^g Mat. xv. 30. ^h ver. 32,—38. ⁱ xvi. 1. ^k ver. 41
^l xxviii. 4, 11. ^m John iv. 48.

26 *The Plea, that Miracles were used by Impostors,*
 sion such a severe Expostulation as that, *Oh faithless
 and perverse Generation, how long shall I be with you?
 how long shall I suffer you?* We cannot suppose, from
 the known Candor of *our Lord's* Character, that this
 was said without some peculiar Reason; and as the
 Words refer to much Condescension and Long-Suf-
 fering formerly used, in giving them much ampler
 Satisfaction than they could strictly have demanded,
 so we see, that whatever *insulting Airs* any of his
Enemies might have put on, when they found *his*
Disciples baffled by so stubborn a *Demon*, *Jesus* him-
 self rebuked him with an Air of irresistible Authority,
 and immediately cured the *Child* in their Presence
 and that of all the *Multitude*.^a

Now when these Facts are set in this just and
 easy Light, I leave it, Sir, to your Invention, fer-
 tile as it seems, to shew how it follows as a Conclu-
 sion from these Premises, that *our Lord* judged
Miracles not to be proper *Proofs of a Divine Mission*,
 and did not perform his *Miracles* as such *Proofs*. I
 shall only add, that as God never intended every
 individual Person should be an *Eye Witness* to mira-
 culous Operations, it seems an amiable Instance of Wis-
 dom and Goodness, in such Cases as these we have
 examined, as well as in that of *Thomas*, to check the
 Petulancy of such, as in those Days would not
 yield to any *Testimony*, but that of their own *Senses*, on
 such an Occasion.

All that remains to be examined under this Class
 of *Objections*, is “ what you say concerning the
 “ Possibility of *Miracles* being used by *Impostors*.”
 (Pag. 46.) This is indeed an important Topick,
 and has been handled with that Accuracy which it
 deserves by those who have professedly written
 upon it. Some Persons of great Eminence in the
Learned and Christian World have so very lately ex-
 amined

^a Compare Mat. xvii. 17, 18. and Mark ix. 14,—27,

and are of great Antiquity, often answered. 27

amined it, that it is quite *unnecessary* for me to resume the Controversy here: And you touch but slightly upon it, conscious as it seems, that after what they have said, it deserves little Stress. I shall therefore answer, in almost as few Lines as your own, only saying,—that I see no Reason to believe, that the Phrase *Lying Wonders in Scripture* signifies, as you in your *Objection* suppose, *true Miracles to confirm a Lye*;—and that the Patrons of *Christianity* challenge all its Enemies to produce *any Instance of Miracles* wrought expressly *to confirm a Falsehood*, which have not been immediately, and on the very Spot, opposed by *superior Miracles* on the Side of *Truth*; and these attended with such *visible Degrees of Superiority*, as to render the *Triumph of Truth* more sensible, and more illustrious, than, in those Instances, it could have been without such Opposition.

What follows in your 51st Page, concerning the Degree in which *Antiquity* impairs the Weight of *Miracles* said to have been wrought *many Ages ago*, has in Part been obviated already; and has been so often urged by the *Enemies of Revelation*, and so largely considered by its learned *Defenders*, that I think myself fairly dispensed with from insisting farther upon it here. I shall only add, that it must be a sensible Pleasure to those that wish well to *Christianity*, to see its Opposers reduced to the wretched Necessity of attacking it with *such Arguments*, as, if they will prove any Thing against it, will also prove that we can have *no rational Evidence* of any Thing that was done *before we were born*; or indeed, of any Thing which we have not *seen with our own Eyes*: An Absurdity, which I suppose no Man living can practise upon his own Understanding, so far as deliberately to admit it, tho' *Infidelity* can sometimes *remove its Mountains*, and bury them in the *Depths of the Sea*.

But there is another *very different Medium*, by which you endeavour to prove, that *Christianity* is *not founded on Argument*, i. e. that we are not to expect *rational Proof* of it; which will require a larger and more particular Discussion; I mean, “that we are *required to believe it on so high a Penalty*.” It seems methinks at the first Proposal, that *this Medium* is of a very extraordinary Nature. One would imagine, the Argument lay *the contrary Way*: That if God required our Assent to it *on Pain of eternal Ruin and Condemnation*, he must have made the *Evidences of it* very clear and strong, and such as every upright Mind must be able to see the Force of, on a diligent Enquiry, which such Minds will not fail to make. However you, Sir, are pleased to insist upon it in a contrary Light, and to argue from it, that something more convincing than *any Argument*, even an *immediate Revelation*, must be *necessary* to justify such a Demand.

The Terms in which you urge this Consideration, are so triumphant, that they rise even to *Insult*. “With what Regard, with what Patience rather, “can one” who expects *Reasons* for his *Faith*, “be supposed to attend to Questions propounded to “him, *under the Restraints of Threats and Authority?* “to be talked to of *Danger* in his Decisions, and “have the *Rod* held out with the *Lesson?* to have “Propositions tendered to his *Reason* with *Penalties* “annexed?—He disdains, with all Justice, an Attempt equally weak and unjust, of frightening him “into a Compliance out of his Power.” (Pag. 8, 9.)—It would be tedious to repeat a great Deal more which you say in the same Strain; in which I heartily wish, that the *Ignorance* which you seem to discover in the State of the Question, may another Day be allowed as some *Excuse* for the *Rashness* and *Arrogance* of the Language, in which you
treat

the Damnable Sentence on Unbelievers. 29

treat it; which will not universally pass for *Demonstration*, tho' some may be weak enough to be carried away with the Torrent.

I know indeed, that the *Sentence* which the *Gospel* pronounces against *Unbelievers* has been thought by many a considerable *Objection* against the *Christian Scheme*; on which Account I the rather take this Opportunity of opening my Sentiments upon it, especially as I apprehend, it has often, on one Side or the other, been set in a very wrong Point of Light.

Now here I shall not attempt to solve the supposed Difficulty by pleading, that the *Denunciation* only refers to the Case of those, who should *refuse* to admit the *Testimony of the Apostles*, confirmed by *miraculous Works* of which they were themselves *Eye-Witnesses*. The Answer would not be allowed by you; since your *Objection* lies against the Demand in any Circumstance of Evidence: Nor do I indeed think the Foundation of the Solution just and true; since whatever Reference *one Text in Question* might have to the *Testimony* immediately borne by the *Apostles*, there are *many others* which cannot be so evaded. I chuse therefore to encounter the *Objection* in *all its Force*, allowing that *every one* who *finally rejects Christianity* is in a *State of Condemnation*, and that *there remains* for him *only a certain fearful looking for of Judgment, and fiery Indignation, which shall devour the Adversaries*.^p But then I conclude, on the Principles of common Equity, that this *only extends* to those who have *Capacities* and *Opportunities* of enquiring into its Evidences; since *Ignorance absolutely unavoidable* is a Plea so considerable, that it must have its Weight before a wise and righteous God. In the Instance of *Idiocy* and *Lunacy*, all the World allows it; and as the only Reason of *that* seems to be,

^p Mark xvi. 16. ^p Heb. x. 26, 27.

30 *Faith is not merely a Speculative Assent.*

be, that *Ignorance* is then *unavoidable*, wherever it is so, it must certainly, on the like Principles, be allowed. But with *these Limitations* I freely declare, that the *Sentence* which the *Gospel* passes on *Unbelievers*, is so far from appearing any *Objection against Christianity*, that I apprehend it greatly *increases its Internal Evidence*, when taken in *Conjunction* with the rest of the *Scheme*; tho' considered alone, it would to be sure be very absurd, to pretend it to be *any Proof* at all.

For the Illustration of this, I must first remove one *Mistake*, which seems to me a Source of perpetual Confusion on this Head, and on which most of the confident Things, which you have ventured to say on this awful Subject, depend, and with which they fall to the Ground: I mean, that an *Assent to the Truth of Christianity* is the main Thing intended by the Word *FAITH*, and required under *so high a Penalty*. On the contrary, nothing is more evident to me, than that (as I have largely shewn elsewhere,) *Faith* in such Passages of the *New Testament* as are here in Question, is considered as a *Practical Thing*, which includes in it, what the Word exactly expresses, *an Act of Trust*, or *Committing the Soul to Christ*, to be, under his Influence and Care, formed for Happiness, and conducted to it, according to the Method of Salvation exhibited in the *Gospel*.

It is true indeed, a Persuasion of the *Speculative Truth of Christianity* must be the Foundation of such a *Faith*, but it is far from being the *only*, or indeed the *primary* Property of it; nor is it that, which is chiefly referred to in these Passages in Question. I readily agree with you, that such an *Assent of the Understanding*, simply considered, could not without great Absurdity, have been demanded under *so high a Penalty*, or indeed under *any Penalty* at all; and

Such a Sentence may attend a Divine Revelation. 31

and this is all, that your Arguments and Defiances here amount to. But if Provision be made, that (excepting as above,) *all* to whom the Gospel comes, shall on due Consideration see *irresistible Evidence* to determine *that Assent*, they may justly be *threatned* with fatal Consequences as *Unbelievers*, whether that *Speculative Assent* be, or be not produced: Since it will appear, on that Supposition, they have either on the one Hand, notwithstanding fair and solemn Warning, *criminally omitted* taking those Measures which would infallibly and necessarily have produced a Conviction of the Truth; or on the other Hand, being convinced of it, have *acted contrary* to what they knew in their own Consciences that Reason and Duty required.

Taking the Matter in this View, it may perhaps seem so clear, that some of my Readers may wonder I should pursue it any farther: Yet as you lay so great a Stress on *this supposed Difficulty*, and as so many other Persons have seemed shocked with it, and some (as I have been informed,) have carried it so far as to *reject Christianity*, because they were *threatned with Damnation* if they did not believe it, I will more particularly open to you that View of Things, which convinces me that these *Damnatory Sentences* increase, rather than weaken, the *Internal Evidence* of that Gospel, to which they are annexed. And here I shall more particularly shew, *first*,—that there is not in the general any *Absurdity*, in supposing *such a Sentence* may attend a *Revelation* from God; and *then*,—that there is a peculiar *Propriety* in it, when connected with *such a Sort of Revelation* as *Christianity* in other Respects appears to be.

For the Illustration of the *first* of these, I would desire you, Sir, calmly to consider, whether it be in the Nature of Things absolutely *impossible*, that
an

32 *GOD might contrive sufficient Evidence,*

an infinitely wise God should contrive *such Evidence* of the Truth of a *Revelation*, as should be *sufficient* to convince every honest Enquirer, who is capable of exercising Reason in the common Affairs of Life; and such only are here in Question. Can a *Mathe-matician* invent a *Demonstration*, which almost every one of a common Genius shall with due Application infallibly understand; and cannot the *great Former* of the Human Spirit, find out a Way of effecting the like, by a *Proof* of another Kind? Or if no *one Argument* which Omniscience could furnish out, can have such a universal Effect, (which I think it would be great Petulancy and Folly to assert,) could not this wise and glorious Being exhibit a *Complication of Arguments* so adjusted, that some one of them at least should be suited to strike every such Enquirer, and to convince him? Nay, to bring the Matter yet lower, when a strong *Complication* of various *Arguments* is provided, is it absolutely *impossible*, that an all-comprehending Mind should contrive a *Scheme of Providence*, in Consequence of which every sincere and honest Enquirer should, either by some *External Occurrence*, (as meeting with a Book, or Friend, in some critical Moment of Doubt or Danger,) or by some *Inward Impres-sion*, (his Thoughts being fixed and guided, as it seems to him, in a Natural Way, and without any particular Revelation,) be led into *such Views* of the *Evidence* as shall engage his Assent; while at the same time, a Mind under the strong Force of *vicious Prejudices* shall be left to *harden itself* against opening *Proofs*, to turn away from the increasing Light, and to aggravate trifling Objections, till it utterly rejects a most salutary Scheme? I ask you, Sir, and I ask every Reader, whether you, or he, will venture so to *limit* an All-wise and Almighty Being, as to say, that it is absolutely *impos-sible* he should adjust Matters, as on any one of the

and then condemn all that reject it. 33

three former Suppositions? But if you cannot say, and prove it to be so, then be pleased with me to reflect on the *Consequence* of supposing any one of these to be a possible Case.

On such a Supposition, I would farther ask you, whether it would not be *Just* with God, to condemn those who should *reject a Revelation* attended with Evidence so adjusted and supported? that is, on this *Hypothesis*, to condemn Persons who thro' *vicious Prejudices* should *refuse* an upright and candid Enquiry into the *Truth*, and perhaps into the *Evidence of it*, attended with some *Circumstances* which tend powerfully to strike the Mind, and awaken Examination and Attention? I see not, how the *Justice* of this could be denied on any Principle, which will not infer, that God cannot punish any Vice of a Sinner's Mind, or any Irregularity of his Life, and will consequently overthrow *Natural Religion*.

Let us then imagine, in *Hypothesis* at least, (since it appears *no Impossibility*;) the *Evidence* adjusted as above, and the Resolution of *punishing* the Infidel formed; I would farther ask, whether in such a Circumstance it was, or could be, *unworthy* the Divine Being to *declare* such a Purpose and Resolution? Some valuable Ends, which might be answered by such a *Declaration* are obvious enough. It could not indeed *convince* any Man's Understanding, that the Doctrine so enforced was *true*; and I do not know that any one was ever weak enough to pretend it: But it might in some Degree *awaken* the Attention of an Enquirer; since tho' he could not believe the *Threatning*, till he discerned the *Evidence* of that *Revelation* of which it made a Part, yet he would easily see, that if it should indeed prove *true*, it must be a Truth of vast Importance; and would also see, that whatever Degrees of *Probability* appeared to be in its Favour

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when

34 *It would be of Use to make these Threatnings,* when first proposed, there must be equal Degrees of *Probability* that he would be miserable in Consequence of rejecting it. Besides, *this Declaration* might excite the Persons employed to publish the *Revelation* of which it made a Part, to act with greater Ardour and Spirit, and to suffer with greater Courage and Resolution, when they knew that the Happiness of Mankind was so intimately concerned in it. It might also awaken in all who embraced this *Revelation*, a Concern to keep it pure and unmingled with any Thing, which by a wrong *Association of Ideas* might occasion a *Prejudice* against it, whether from the *Absurdity* of its supposed Doctrines, or the *Immorality* of those who received and maintained it; since such *Prejudices* might prove so fatal. Now each of these appears to me a very important End, of which many *Objectors* against this Part of *Christianity* seem to be very little apprized. *

On

* Agreeable to what I have said above, of the *various Use* of such *Threatnings*, it may be observed, that many of those Passages of the *New Testament* which express the Divine Purpose of *punishing the Rejecters of Christianity*, are not immediately addressed to *Unbelievers*, (tho' they are at other Times, as was very reasonable, solemnly warned;) but to those who were to be *Preachers of the Gospel*, whom therefore (if any such read this Passage,) I beseech and intreat in the *Bowels of Christ* seriously to consider them. Thus it is, in his *Charge* to the *Twelve Apostles*, (*Mat. x. 15.*) and to the *Seventy Disciples*, (*Luke x. 12.*) that our Lord represents *Unbelievers* as certainly devoted to so dreadful a Destruction, that it should be *more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the Day of Judgment than for them*. And it is to his *Apostles* also, that, when risen from the Dead, he says, just after a Commission to go and preach the Gospel to every Creature, (*Mark xvi. 16.*) *He that believeth, and is baptized, shall be Saved; but HE THAT BELIEVETH NOT, SHALL BE DAMNED*. Many Passages of the same Purport in the *Epistles* are addressed to *Christians*, no Doubt with the same general View of awakening their compassionate Efforts to deliver those wretched Creatures who were in such extream Danger.

and to omit them might occasion Complaint. 35

On the other Hand, Sir, if no such *Threatnings* were annexed, and the Purpose of God to execute his deserved Displeasure on the *Rejecters* of this *Revelation*, should at length take Place, would not the unhappy Creature have Room to make some such Reflection as this, when he was plunging into final Destruction? “Why was not I *admonished* “of the *Danger of Unbelief* in such a Case as this? “When so many other Things were declared, “and so many other Messages sent, why was not “this one Article added, by the Messengers who “brought the rest?” Now tho’ *Conscience* might tell such a Wretch, that every *vicious Prejudice* was

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penal,

ger. Compare 2 *Thess.* i. 7,—9. 2 *Tim.* ii. 25, 26. and *Jude*, ver. 23.

I must also take the Liberty to add, that there seems to me a very beautiful *Propriety* in the *Manner* of our Lord’s *expressing* several of these *Denunciations*, which is not in a *direct*, but an *oblique Form*; which particularly became that gracious Messenger of the Divine Love, who visited the World, *not to condemn*, but *to save it*. Thus the awful Doom of *Caper-naum* and *Bethsaida* is uttered by *Christ*, not when speaking to them, but when distant from them, in the Form of a *Lamentation over them*. (*Mat.* xi. 20,—24.) So likewise is *Jerusalem* lamented over, as abandoned to Destruction for its incorrigible and perverse Infidelity, once when *Christ* was as far off as *Galilee*, (*Luke* xiii. 34, 35.) and afterwards, when only approaching, and beholding it from Mount *Olivet*. (*Luke* xix. 41, 42.) And this last Time the Ruin was predicted in *broken Language*, and with a Flow of *Tears*; expressing on the one Hand, the Benevolence of our Lord’s Temper, which engaged him to mourn over the justest Condemnation which Sinners could bring on themselves; and on the other, the inevitable Certainty, and unutterable Terror of that *Destruction*, which was coming upon them. It is one Instance among a thousand, of that *fine Spirit* which runs thro’ all our Lord’s Behaviour; and which renders it astonishing, that his Cause should meet with such malignant Opposition among many who set up for *Criticks* in the *TO ΠΙΠΕΡΙΟΝ*, and the *TO ΚΑΛΟΝ*, the *Decorum*, and the *Beauty* of Actions. I have known a *Criminal* touched, and even charmed, with the *Tenderness* which a Judge has shewn in passing a capital Sentence upon him; and I wonder, it should not be the Case here.

36 *The Absurdity of supposing a Revelation*

penal, and that if Mercy were indeed offered and slighted, the Consequence must be dangerous and fatal; yet it seems congruous to the Divine Wisdom and Goodness, to foreclose such a *Plea* as this, even in the Mouth of a perishing Sinner.

On this View I hope it will appear *not incredible* in *Hypothesis* and *Speculation*, that a *Revelation* might come from God, the *Evidence* of which should be so adjusted, that all who have an Opportunity of examining into it might be *required* to receive and submit to it, *on Pain* of God's *highest Displeasure*; tho' you, Sir, have been pleased to paint this as a *Supposition* in itself flagrantly *absurd*. Nay I apprehend, it must follow from these Principles, that the very *Supposition* of a *Revelation* in general implies, on the one Hand, *Sufficiency of Evidence* to every candid Enquirer; and on the other, certain *Divine Displeasure* against the *Rejetters* of it, which if not expressly declared, will at least be implied.

But how far this is from a real *Absurdity*, may farther appear by viewing the Matter in an opposite Light. Let me imagine, a Man should profess to bring me a *Divine Revelation* with great Solemnity; and yet at the same Time should declare, that I might *reject it without any Danger*. I know not how others might judge, but I am sure *this* would appear to me so incoherent, that I should hardly give myself the Trouble of enquiring into his Credentials, unless some very striking Circumstance appeared at the first View. For it would be natural to conclude, it may be *true*, or it may be *false*: And if it be *true*, by the Confession of the Messenger I have no great Concern in it; I may be happy, without paying any Regard to it: It is therefore comparatively a *Trifling Concern*, and by Consequence so much *less likely* to be the Subject of a Divine Interposition.

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without any Threatning to such as reject it. 37

Take it therefore in any Light, and it appears to me, that an Obligation *on some high Penalty* to enquire into Credentials, and by Consequence to receive and obey the Command, is in the Nature and Reason of Things to be supposed as the Counterpart of the Honour of receiving a Message from God; and, as the *Law* speaks, *transit cum Onere*, it comes to a Man (if I may be allowed the Expression,) with this awful Incumbrance, "He must reject it at his Peril." And agreeably to this Remark, we always find (so far as I can recollect,) thro' the whole Series of the *Old Testament*, that where the Message sent from God was disregarded, some *signal Punishment* was inflicted on the Person to whom it was addressed; which I mention, not as arguing from it, but as a Circumstance illustrating in one View the Reasonings above, and in another receiving Illustration from them.

These, Sir, are the Principles, on which I said above, that *Threatnings* against those who should disbelieve and reject a *Revelation* in Question, are so far from being any Argument against its being Reasonable and Divine, as some have vainly pretended; that on the contrary, they are so suitable to a wisely concerted Scheme, that the *Omission of them* would rather be an *Objection* against a pretended Revelation, than any Argument in its Favour.

I shall beg Leave, Sir, to detain you a little longer on this Head, while I attempt to shew that *these Reasonings*, which appear of general Force, have a peculiar and singular Weight when applied to *Christianity*: Which will appear from considering the *Degrees of Evidence* to which it pretends; and several other *Circumstances* attending the *Scheme* itself, and the *Manner* in which it was introduced into the World,

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38 *Christianity has an Evidence thus adjusted.*

I have discoursed at large already on the Kind of *Evidence* with which *Christianity* was attended, during the Ministry of *Christ* and his *Apostles*, and have referred to several Passages, in which the *Rejection* of it, is charged on such *vicious Prejudices*, as must render Men *highly criminal* before GOD; and some other Passages to the same Purpose may be seen in the *Margin*.^a I shall only add here, that I apprehend, our blessed *Lord* (who said nothing in vain, and in whose short Sentences there is often a Weight far beyond what the Generality of his Enemies, or his Followers, have considered,) seems expressly to have asserted the *most extraordinary* of all the *Suppositions* made above to be *Fact*; I mean *that* of a *Divine Superintendency* over every well disposed Mind, to lead it into the *Evidences* of the *Truth of his Doctrine*. And this, you will observe, he has spoken in Terms suiting, not only the Period of *his own*, or the *Apostles* Ministry, but future Ages too. You will perhaps from this general Hint, recollect that important Passage: *If any Man will do his Will*, i. e. the Will of my Father, *εαν τις θελη ποιειν*, “if he be resolutely determined upon it,” (as I have elsewhere observed, the *Phrase* plainly signifies *) *he shall know of the Doctrine, whether it be of GOD, or whether I speak of myself*. And the Prophet *Isaiak* seems long before to have represented the Matter much in the same View, tho’ according to his Manner, in more Figurative Terms; when he says, *An High Way shall be there; and it shall be called THE WAY OF HOLINESS;—the wayfaring Men, tho’ Fools, shall not err therein*.^b

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^a Acts xiii. 46. xviii. 6. Rom. ii. 8, 9. 2 Cor. iv. 3, 4. 1 Thess. ii. 14,—16. 2 Thess. i. 6,—9. ii. 10,—12. Heb. iii. 7,—13. vi. 7, 8. 1 John v. 19. 1 John vii. 17.

* See *Family Expofitor*, Vol. ii. pag. 47. ^b Isai. xxxv. 8.

I might also shew at large, if I were not afraid of running out this Letter to too great a Length, that not only those *Degrees of Evidence* to which *Christianity* pretends, but also several other *Circumstances* attending the *Scheme* itself, and the *Manner* in which it was introduced into the World, render the *Threatnings* annexed peculiarly *suitable* to it, beyond the Degree in which they might, on the Principles above, have suited a *Revelation* in these *Respects different from the Gospel*.

It is very material for the Illustration of this Point, to recollect that the *Christian Scheme* supposes Mankind under *Guilt*, and obnoxious on Account of it to *Misery*, to dreadful *final Misery*; and accordingly makes its Proposals, not merely under the Notion of a *Benefit*, but of a *Remedy*; of a *Remedy* without which Men were *perishing*. Now the necessary Consequence of this must be, the *Death* and *Destruction* of those who *reject* it. In this View the Sacred Writers, with great Propriety, sometimes place it. *GOD sent his Son into the World, that whosoever believeth in him might not perish;—and therefore he that believeth not on him, is condemned already, because he hath not believed:*^t—It plainly appears from his *Unbelief*, that he is actually under *Sentence*; and as it follows afterwards, *The Wrath of GOD*, that *Wrath* from which he might otherwise have been saved and rescued, *abideth on him*.^u And to this Purpose *Christ* declares elsewhere, *If you believe not that I am he, you shall die in your Sins,*^w shall perish with the *Guilt* of all those *Transgressions* on your Heads, from which I was so sincerely willing to have delivered you.

The *Threatnings* in Question are also *congruous* to the Importance of those *Blessings*, which are offered to all who embrace and obey the *Gospel*. These are

^t John iii. 16,—18. ^u Ver. 36. ^w John viii. 24.

40 *The great Importance of its Blessings,*

are well known in Speculation; but, were they duly considered, they would appear to have much greater Weight than many are aware. A full Pardon of all the most aggravated Sins, which the true Penitent has ever committed; the Communication of Divine Influences, to enable us to conquer the Power of Sin to which we were enslaved, and to fit us for Happiness present and future; an Admission into the Family of God, and a Participation of all the Joys and Privileges of his Children; the Reception of our separate Spirits into the Presence of God, and to the most glorious Society, Enjoyments, and Services there; and at length, the Resurrection of our Bodies, and the Eternal Happiness of the whole Man: *Such Favours* offered to *condemned Sinners* by the offended Majesty of Heaven and Earth, must certainly have drawn after them *severe Punishments* on the presumptuous Creatures by whom they were slighted and despised, had they been notified and proposed by the meanest Inhabitant of the Celestial World, or even of our own, as an Ambassador from God. But when to all this it is added, that a Person so glorious, so excellent, and so divine as the *Son of GOD* himself, *his only begotten Son*, became the Messenger of his Father's Love and Grace to us; and that he might testify it in a more effectual Manner, became also, for many succeeding Years, an Inhabitant of our low World; and at length submitted to such extream Evils, even to *Death itself*, to a *Death* attended with such astonishing Circumstances of Ignominy and Torture, for this great Reason among others, that he might affect our Minds with powerful Sentiments of religious Veneration, of Gratitude and Love; who can wonder, if there be an *awful Counterpart* to all these Miracles of Condescension and Mercy? Who can wonder, if the *Contempt* of *such a Gospel*, so circumstantiated, and

and the Way of proposing them, require it. 41
 and so sealed, be *penal* in Proportion to the Degree
 in which it is *criminal*? Can it possibly be imagined,
 that the *Son of GOD* should become Incarnate,
 and Bleed, and Dye; and that *his Spirit* should af-
 terwards be sent down from Heaven, with all that
 splendid *Apparatus of various Languages* instantane-
 ously taught, and *Miraculous Powers* every where
 exerted; and all this to make Way for a Disco-
 very, which those to whom it was sent might
 trample upon with Impunity? that they might
 reject and deride it themselves, and perhaps make
 it almost the only serious Business of their Lives, to
 expose it to universal Contempt; and yet, tho'
 living and dying Impenitent, partake in the Day
 of final Retribution, with that *Redeemer* whom
 they have rejected and opposed, in the Joys he
 will bestow on his faithful Servants, and which he
 will share with them? This, Sir, is such a shock-
 ing *Incongruity* even in *Hypothesis*, that you your-
 self could not forbear exploding it; and I think
 you have done it with great Propriety and Spirit.
 (Pag. 45.) It is indeed as you represent it: The
 least Intimation of *Mercy* to the *finally unbelieving*
 and *impenitent* would have been a *Blemish* on the
whole Scheme, and a Kind of *Toleration* for that *Neg-*
lect, which in such a Case it would probably have
 met with in the World. Whereas it is now with
 the most becoming Majesty, that such a Dispen-
 sation of Wonders terminates in a Day, when this
 humbled and dishonoured Saviour shall appear in
flaming Fire, taking Vengeance on them that know not
GOD, and that obey not the Gospel of Jesus Christ;
who shall therefore be punished with everlasting Destruc-
tion, from the Presence of the Lord, and from the Glory
*of his Power.**

Permit me only to touch on one Consideration
 more, which illustrates the Congruity of these De-

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nunciations,

* 2 Thess. i. 8, 9.

42. *Strong Sanctions proper to fit for its Trials.*

nunciations, as a Part of the Gospel Scheme; and that is, the *Difficulties* thro' which *that Scheme* was to struggle in its early Infancy. It was wisely ordered by Providence for the Establishment and Edification of succeeding Ages, that the *first Professors* of Christianity should encounter great *Hardships* and *Sufferings* on Account of it; and it would be easy to shew, that a Scheme calculated for universal Reformation must expose to such Trials, when it made its Entrance into *so degenerate a World*. Now in this View there was an evident Necessity, that *the Fear of him, who after he had killed, could cast both Soul and Body into Hell,* should be opposed to the Threats of cruel Persecutors. It was necessary, that the Danger of *Rejecting, Deserting, or even Dissembling the Faith* should be plainly and affectionately represented; otherwise Men would have held themselves fairly dispensed with from enquiring and looking into a Scheme, so likely to prove destructive to their Fortunes, and even to their Lives, in this World, and by its own Confession, by no means necessary to avoid greater Evils in another.

From all these Reasonings it appears to me undeniably evident, that as some *severe Threatnings* to those who *reject it* must probably in any Case attend a *Divine Revelation*; so *these Threatnings* are so evidently *congruous* to the peculiar Nature, Design, and Circumstances of Christianity, that had they not made a Part of it, the *Absence of them* would have been a great *Diminution* to its *Internal Evidence*, and probably an effectual Bar to its Propagation in the World.

I am sensible, Sir, the grand *Objection* against all these Reasonings is taken, from the Appearance of a *virtuous* and amiable *Disposition* in some who *disbelieve the Gospel*, and from the Possibility that a
wrong

The Case of such as have wrong Ideas of it. 43

wrong *Association of Ideas* in others, leading them to conclude those Things to be contained in the *Christian Revelation* which do not indeed belong to it; may engage some to *reject the whole* from the apparent *Absurdity* which they see in these spurious, tho' solemn, Additions to it; as for Instance, in those vast Tracts of Land, in which *Transubstantiation* and *Image Worship* are represented, not merely as *consistent* with *Christianity*, but as in a Manner *essential* to it, by those who are its established Teachers, and may therefore be presumed best to understand it.

As for the latter of these Cases, it must be considered, how far the Person so *mistaken* in the *Idea* he has formed of *Christianity* has fallen into that Mistake *necessarily*, and how far it may be charged on his own *Negligence* or *Mismanagement*. It is possible, that in some Countries *Christianity* may be so *misrepresented*, and the *common People* may be so utterly *incapable* of coming at its true Contents, that they may be looked upon as Persons *unavoidably ignorant* of it; and consequently are not included in the Number of those, whose Case we are now considering. But if any may have Recourse to the *Scriptures*, and will not give themselves the Trouble of *searching them*, to see whether these *supposed absurd Doctrines* are really contained in them, or no, they must stand by the Consequences of their *Indolence* and *Rashness*: And I fear, the *Nobility* and *Gentry* in *Popish* Countries, (who are the Persons among whom *Deism* probably prevails most,) are generally in this Case. Such might easily have discovered so much Good in *Christianity*, and so many Arguments in its Favour, as might have proved it worth their while to have read over the *New Testament* again and again, with an honest Desire of knowing what are *indeed* the *Doctrines* and *Precepts*

44 *The Virtues of Deists very deficient.*

contained in it. I question not, but such an Employment would have been a much more rational and useful Way of spending Time, than what the Persons in Question have often preferred to it; and it is not so *obscure*, as to leave a *candid Reader* in such a Case *capable* of imagining, it teaches, or requires, any Thing *absurd*.

As for the *supposed Virtues* of some who *know the Gospel* and *reject it*, I fear, Sir, when they come to be tried by the great Standard of *true Excellence in Character*, they will be found exceedingly deficient. *Virtue* is a Word of a very dubious Signification; and, as it is generally used, that Man is denominated *virtuous*, who is *temperate, just, and humane* in his Conduct, be he ever so *destitute of Religion*. Now with Regard to such Persons it is evident, that a wise and righteous God will never treat them, as if they had been *debauched, unjust, and inhumane*. Nevertheless, if such as these live *without GOD in the World*; if they *cast off Fear, and restrain Prayer before GOD*; if (which the very Fact of their *rejecting Christianity* proves,) they will not set themselves to *enquire* diligently and impartially into the Intimations of the Divine Will; if they are *unbumbled* before God for the various Transgressions of their Lives, and so proudly *conceited* of their own Reasonings, that they will set their *pre-conceived Opinions* on particular Subjects against all the Weight of *Internal and External Evidence* attending the *Christian Revelation*, when contradicting those Opinions; I cannot see on what Ground they can complain, if they be finally treated as Persons, who, while they have *reverenced Men*, have *forgotten GOD*: Nor can it be imagined, that, under the Load of so much Guilt, they will have any Claim to *future Rewards*, merely because they have had *Sense and good Nature* enough, to *judge rightly*
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concerning what would generally be the *best Interests* and *Enjoyments* of Human Life, even if there were *no Deity*; and so have chosen to live *like Men* rather than *Brutes*, so far as *Sobriety* and *mutual Kindness* alone were in Question.

Had the *best of Men* a suitable and continual Sense of the Majesty and Purity of the Divine Nature, and of that Love, Duty, and Zeal, which a reasonable Creature owes to its Creator, they would, with all their *humane* and *social Virtues* about them, fall down into the Dust before God, and say, *Enter not into Judgment with thy Servants, for in thy Sight shall no Man living be justified!*² and they would feel a *Load of Guilt* pressing on their Consciences, and engaging them most attentively to listen to a *Scheme* by which *free and full Pardon* might be expected, in a Way most honourable to the Rights of the Divine Government. And if no Admonitions can bring those who are now *insensible* to such a Temper, we can only lament, that their *Conviction* is delayed to *so late*, and probably to *so fatal a Day*.

But if there be any where in a *Christian* and *Protestant Nation*, a Man *not yet* thoroughly convinced of *Christianity*, who, on the Principles of *Natural Religion*, reverences and loves the great *Author of his Being*; who pours out his Soul before him in the Exercise of private and publick Devotion; who humbly traces every Intimation of his Will which he has already received, that he may yield a constant and uniform Obedience to it; and seeks Illumination from the great *Father of Lights* for the farther Discovery of it: If there be a Person, who tho' yet in the State of *Hesitation* concerning the *Divine Authority* of the *Scriptures*, will diligently search them, not with a View to cavil and object, but honestly to see what is the Genius and Design

² Psal. cxliiii. 2.

46 *Christianity tends to make Men better.*

sign of them, and will also read and consult the ablest *Defenders of Christianity*, in order to gain a fuller Information in its *Evidence*; I will venture to pronounce, that such a Man is *not far from the Kingdom of GOD*, and doubt not, but that according to the Declaration of our faithful *Saviour*, he will ere long *know that the Doctrine is of GOD*.^a I cannot believe, that such a one ever *died an Infidel*; because I have abundantly stronger Evidence that *Christianity* is true, than I have of the *Virtue* of any one who *died denying it*. But you well know, Sir, that the *Generality* of our *Deists* are quite out of the present Question, being *most of them* such as a *Roman Censor* would not have borne in any of the Highest Ranks of *their Citizens*, how eagerly soever any may plead for their Admission into the *New Jerusalem*, the Presence of God, and the Mansions of the Blessed.

Nevertheless it is possible some may object, with Regard to the Person, whom we described above, as making *so hopeful a Progress* towards *embracing the Gospel*, what will he be the *better* after all, when it is *embraced*? What can the single Circumstance of *believing Christianity* to be true, effect towards recommending a Man to the Divine Favour, who is already supposed not only *temperate, just, and benevolent*, but *devout* too? This is a Question which I have sometimes heard advanced, tho' I do not recollect that you mention it; but I wonder it should enter into any Mind, who knows what the *Faith* which constitutes a Man a *real Christian* is, according to the Account given of it above, agreeable to the whole Tenour of the *New Testament*: And by the Way, had you, Sir, considered *that*, you would have found very little Room to triumph (as you do, *pag. 10.*) in our being obliged to *pray for its Increase*. Were it merely a *Speculative Assent*, your Arguments on this
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^a John vii. 17.

What is the Nature of the Faith it requires. 47

Head would be as conclusive, as they are foreign to the *Scripture Idea* of it; which is a *cordial and practical Acquiescence in the Scheme of Salvation by Christ*. This, Sir, evidently includes in it a becoming Affection towards *the Son of GOD*, that illustrious Person, whom, venerable and amiable as he is, every *Infidel* must necessarily neglect, and to whom when once revealed, God may most reasonably require express *Homage, Duty, and Subjection*, on Pain of his highest Displeasure. *Faith* also, in this View of it, will be the Foundation of such deep *Humiliation* before God, of such ardent *Love* to him, and does, in one Word, so illustriously ennoble, and improve, all the other Branches of a *lovely and virtuous Disposition*; that surely no one, who has either felt *its Power*, or even studied *its Nature* and genuine *Influence*, can long doubt to what Purpose it is demanded and insisted upon. And he that has observed the *Effects* it has produced, and the illustrious as well as numerous *Victories* it has gained over *the World*, beyond what any other Principle could ever obtain, will be unable to *depreciate it*, without greatly debasing the Nature and Extent of that *Moral Virtue*, which he pretends to exalt in Preference to it; as I think it were easy to shew at large, if the Compass of this *Letter* would admit it.

And thus, Sir, I have given you my deliberate Thoughts on the *Reasonableness, Justice, and Necessity* of the *awful Sentence* which the *Gospel* passes on those who *reject it*; and whether it may move you to *Gratitude*, to *Anger*, or to *Scorn*, I cannot dismiss the Subject without solemnly and earnestly *intreating you*, seriously to reflect upon it, as your own Concern, and to ask yourself, as an *Immortal Creature* shortly to appear at the Tribunal of God, whether you have not Reason to *humble yourself before him*.

48 *Reflection on this Part of the Debate.*

him in the Review of this, when compared with the Manner in which you have ventured to talk on *this tremendous Subject*? Your Heart may perhaps be less impressible; but I am sure that for my own Part, were I to think, I will not say as an *bumble Christian*, but as a *sober and religious Deist* in Character ought, if *Christianity* had never been heard of, I would not for the whole World presume to say, as you have in *Effect* frequently done, “ that “ an Infinitely Wise God could not give a *Revelation* attended with such *rational Evidence*, as “ should render every Man to whom it came, * “ justly obnoxious to *high Penalties* for *rejecting* “ it.” Nay I think, it would fill me with Astonishment and Grief, that a *mortal Man* should be found, *arrogant and petulant* enough, to *limit the Majesty of Heaven*, by such an Assertion; and to declare in express Words, a *Disdain* at the Mention of *his Lifted Rod*, when *beld out* over those who should *despise* his appointed Method of Pardon and Salvation. May the Hour never come, when this *ill-judged Bravery* shall be lamented amidst *inconsolable Horrors*!

After so copious an Examination of this important Question, in which I have laboured to give you, and my other Readers, all the Satisfaction I could, I have not left myself Room to mention *many other Things* in your Essay, which might admit and require Animadversion. Of those yet remaining unhandled, your Account of the *Agency and Office of the Divine Spirit* seems the most considerable. I leave my Reader to consult it for himself, as it stands in your *56th and following Pages*: In which he will find a *Mixture of Truth and Falsehood* so blended together, as on the whole to amount

* N. B. I here suppose *extraordinary Cases* allowed for, as above.

mount to a *Scheme* apparently contrary to *Fact*; and in *Theory* so wild, that he will not find it easy to believe, it could be *seriously* proposed by any who enjoyed the Use of his *Reason*; or that you in particular meant any Thing by it, unless it were to *expose Christianity*, by representing *this* as its *Doctrine*, and its grand *Foundation*.

You must at least, Sir, add the Sanction of your *Name* to your Pamphlet, before you will be thought *seriously* to teach, (as in *pag. 59.*) “that every *baptized* “*Person* is *inspired* in a *Moment* with an *irresistible* “*Light from Heaven*,” which yet, according to your 63d *Page*, may be resisted, and thereby *make Infidelity criminal*; “a *Light*, by which our *Faith* is “*completed in an Instant*, the most perfect and “*finished Creed* produced *at once*, and made *self-evident* to the *Mind* in which it is lodged, in a “*Way* perhaps little differing from *Intuition* itself; “*such Characters* being stamped upon the *Heart*, “*as no Misrepresentations* can ever possibly intervene “to corrupt, *no succeeding Suggestions* of a different “*Style*, to dispute the *Preference*, or shake its “*Authority in the Mind*.” In one Word, “we “*are*” in *Consequence* of this *Extraordinary Operation*, (if we are to take the *Matter* as you represent it,) “brought under a *Monitor* and *Guardian*, “*which* does not leave us *for one Moment* liable “to a *Possibility* of *Error* and *Imposition*.” These, Sir, are *your own Words*; and if any Reader, to whom I am personally a *Stranger*, should question whether any Thing *so absurd* as the last *Clause* is any where in the *World* to be found, your 60th *Page* will convince him how faithfully they are transcribed.

I apprehend, perhaps *with you*, that merely to *propose this Notion*, is to *confute it*. However for the *Credit* of the *Christian World*, I am glad to say, it is *no very common one*, and may, for any

50 *Consideration of this waved for the present.*

Thing I at present know, be quite peculiar; whatever *unguarded Approaches* some good Men may have made towards it, or whatever *Airs of Infallibility* they may have assumed, which, to do you Justice, I cannot but imagine, you meant by all this *Galimatia* to expose. It would be an easy Matter to vindicate *the Scriptures*, which you have pressed in to support this strange Representation; but every good *Commentary* upon them may furnish the Reader with an *Antidote* against such an Interpretation, if his *own Reflections* do not (as might reasonably be expected,) immediately supersede the Necessity of having Recourse to any *Commentary* at all. I shall not therefore at present pursue the Matter any farther; but leave you to be *confuted*, I will not say by every rational *Christian Writer* on this Subject, but even by every *Error* which any good *Christian* has fallen into, on this Head, or on any other; for every such *Error* as effectually *confutes* this Notion, as a thousand Volumes of the Strictest Argument could do it.

Nevertheless, Sir, if you still continue to urge the Matter, and *the Publick* seem desirous of it, I may perhaps take this your *Third General* under as particular a Consideration, as your *Two former*. In the mean time, I am well satisfied, that none who knows me will imagine, that I have declined the Task from any *Suspensions* which I entertain concerning the *Reality* or *Importance* of the *Operations of the Blessed Spirit* on the Mind, to enlighten and renew, to sanctify and strengthen, to cheer and to guide the *Children of GOD*, and the *Heirs of Glory*. I am continually bearing my *Testimony* to this great and weighty *Truth* in my *Sermons* and *Writings*; as I can never expect, that any Course of *Preaching* or *Writing* should be useful to the Souls of Men, in which so glorious a *Doctrine of Christianity* is either *denied* or *omitted*.

There

Other Parts of the Letter acquiesced in. 51

There are many other Particulars in your *Letter*, about which I shall have no Controversy with you at all, but shall willingly leave *those Deities* to plead, *whose Altars you have cast down*. The Imputation of the *Faith of Sureties* to the *baptized Infant*;—the *necessary Connection* between the Administration of that Rite, and the Communication of some *extraordinary Influences of the Spirit*;—the *Power of the Magistrate* to determine *Articles of Faith*, and to impose *Forms of Worship* by *sanguinary Laws*, or *Laws* in any lower Degree *penal*;—the *compelling young Persons* to declare their Sentiments on some of the nicest *Theological Controversies*, before they can be supposed at all to have examined them,—and *frowning severely* upon them, as soon as they appear to *suspect*, what they never had any *convincing Evidence* to engage them to *believe*:—These, and some other Particulars (which lie between the 95th and 101st Page of your Book,) I confess you have *rallied* with a just Severity. And I am particularly pleased with the serious Air with which the *Raillery* on these Heads is carried, even to the Defence of *Fire and Faggot* in the Cause of Religion; from which I presume, Sir, you apprehend yourself to be in no Danger. It will, no Doubt, be of Service to those Readers, who, without such a Key, might, in the Simplicity of their Hearts, have been led into a wrong Judgment of your Views, from those *Airs of Devotion and Orthodoxy*, which you assume in other Passages.

A Design to overthrow *Natural Religion*, as well as *Revealed*; to confound the Nature of *Virtue* and *Vice*, and subvert, so far as a Mortal can do it, the *Throne of GOD* among Men; to destroy all the Foundations of *Truth, Justice, and Benevolence*, which arise from a Perswasion of his Divine Presence and

52 *The Tendency of the Author's Principles*

Providence, leaving us to all the Absurdities, the Temptations, and Miseries of *Atheism*; is so black, and so horrid an *Enormity*, that I would by no means charge it, by any Train of Consequences, even on a *Nameless Author*. And indeed I will not allow myself so much as to think, that you were *capable* of setting yourself about it, as *our Law* expresses it in Matters of much less Importance, *knowingly and with Malice forethought*. Charity teaches me rather to hope, that it was in mere *Sport*, and Wantonness of Heart, you have thrown about these *Firebrands, Arrows, and Death*.^b But what the *Sport* has been, the Weapons themselves shall shew: And whatever you meant, I think it my Duty, before I conclude, to shew, that you have in Fact *laid the Foundation* of the *Temple of Confusion*, (if I may be allowed the Expression,) and pointed out the Way to the utter *Destruction of Religion*, in every Form, and in every Degree. I hope therefore, Sir, that how ungrateful soever the Subject may be, you will give me a patient Hearing, while I spend a few Moments in the Illustration of it; partly lest some unthinking People, dazzled by the *Sophistry* of your boasted Arguments should implicitly follow you, *not knowing whither they go*; and partly, as I insinuated in the Entrance of my *former Letter*, that I apprehended your Pamphlet had *such a Tendency*; for I should think I acted unworthy my Character as a *Christian* and a *Divine*, if I left such an Insinuation entirely unsupported. And indeed, Sir, if your Pamphlet has those Views, which (so far as I can learn) are universally imputed to it, I should hope nothing might be more likely to convince you of the *Weakness of those Arguments*, by which you attempt to shake the Foundation of *Christianity*, than to shew you, that if they *prove* any Thing, they prove a great Deal too much; *prove*, what I hope you would

^b Prov. xxvi. 18, 19.

would abhor, as infinitely the most pernicious of all Falsehoods.

In order, if possible, to make you sensible of this, give me Leave to suppose *an Atheist*, or if that be too great a Monster to be supposed, *a Sceptick*, who has, and will have, no fixed Sentiments in *Religion* of any Kind, addressing himself to you, or to some Patron of *Natural Religion*, on *your own Principles*, and in many of *your own Words*, to some such Purpose as this.

“ It is a most *absurd Thing*, so much as to pretend to offer *any Defence* of *Religion*, so far as
 “ even to argue the *Existence of a Deity* from the
 “ *Works of Nature*, or to go about to prove that
 “ we lie under any Obligations to Sobriety, Honesty, or mutual Kindness. If such *Disputes* as
 “ these be allowed, there is *no ensuring Conviction*.
 “ (Pag. 5.) If the *Motives*, even to these Virtues,
 “ may be *examined* and considered, they may be
 “ *innocently rejected* to ; for who shall ascertain the
 “ *Moment* when I am to become *virtuous*, if I am
 “ allowed to *examine* why I am to be so ? (Pag. 93.)
 “ Your boasted *rational Evidence* of these Things is
 “ a false unwarranted Notion, without the least
 “ Ground to support it in Nature. (Pag. 7.) You
 “ say, *all Men* are to *think alike* upon these Topics ; *all* to *acknowledge*, there is an Original,
 “ Intellectual Being, endowed with all Natural and
 “ Moral Perfections, and that all the Rules of
 “ Virtue and Duty are to be inviolably observed :
 “ But how should these Reasons of yours, whatever they are, and which therefore I will not
 “ condescend so much as to hear, produce this
 “ *Unity of Opinion* in these important Articles ? I
 “ disdain to bestow a second Thought on *so preposterous a Scheme*. (Pag. 8.) Tell me not, that by
 “ neglecting to enquire into the *Existence of a GOD*,
 “ and

54 *How an Atheist or Sceptick might argue*

“ and thereby running into an utter Disregard to
 “ all that Gratitude, Veneration, and Obedience,
 “ which, you say, I owe him, I may incur his
 “ Displeasure ; or that by refusing to enquire into
 “ the Nature and Obligations of *Virtue*, I may
 “ incur a thousand other Inconveniences :—I can-
 “ not have Patience to be *threatned* into Conse-
 “ quences, to be talked to of *Danger* in Decisions,
 “ and to have *the Rod* held out with the Lesson.
 “ (*Ibid.*) It is *impossible*, there should be any such
 “ Thing as *rational Religion* ; for if it be *necessary* at
 “ all, it must be *equally necessary* for all Men, and
 “ at all Times. *Children* must love and fear the
 “ Deity, before they could know any Thing of
 “ him ; and their *Knowledge*, if built upon such
 “ Principles as these you offer me, would come
 “ quite *too late* to regulate the *Practice*. (*Pag.* 13.)
 “ You say, you find *Religion reasonable in Speculation* ;
 “ but I tell you, in your own Words, *that is no-*
 “ *thing to the Purpose* : The Question is, Whether I,
 “ and every Man, be *bound to believe it* ? (*Pag.* 18.)
 “ And who can imagine this, who considers how
 “ *few Men* are qualified for Reasoning ; (*Pag.* 17.) and
 “ how possible it is, that if the *Examination* of
 “ these Things were to be attempted, a Man
 “ might not *live long enough* to go thro’ with the
 “ *Proof* ? (*Ibid.*) What if it be indeed so, that the
 “ Perfections of the *Deity*, and the Obligations of
 “ *Virtue*, may be *rationally demonstrated* ; yet you
 “ know, the *Generality of Apprehensions* extend not
 “ beyond a *Simple Proposition*, and are thrown out
 “ at once at the very Mention of a *Medium* : (*Ibid.*)
 “ Nay the very *ablest and best of Men* are (as you
 “ have taught me,) *disqualified for fair Reasoning*,
 “ by their *Natural Prejudices*. We *Atheists* have
 “ contracted a *Partiality* for particular Objects and
 “ Notions, familiarized to us by long Acquaintance :
 “ An honest and natural Fondness for *Hobbes*, and
 “ *Spinoza*,

“ Spinoza, and the rest of our old Friends, will
 “ never permit us to exert our Judgments in a
 “ *disinterested* Manner ; not to say, how many
 “ of the *Living* may be concerned in the Event.
 “ (Pag. 23.)”

“ Besides,” might your *Atheistical* or *Sceptical*
 Disciple say, “ it is an *immense Task* you would assign
 “ me, a *Task* for which *Years* will not suffice, to
 “ run thro’ all the Acute and *Metaphysical* Writers,
 “ *Masters in Israel*, who have each of them had
 “ their darling Argument, and have many of them
 “ perhaps written whole *Folio’s* to illustrate it. Or
 “ if you would lead me to quit the high *priori* Road,
 “ (without examining which, it is nevertheless
 “ plain, that I can have no full Idea of the Subject,)
 “ and would argue from *Second Causes* and the *Harmony*
 “ of *Nature*, how can I judge of this without un-
 “ derstanding the *Laws of Nature*? and how can
 “ I attain the Knowledge of *those Laws*, but by a
 “ deep and long Attention to *Mathematical Studies*?
 “ As I must take the *Faith of a Deity* in the Way
 “ to *complete Virtue*, according to your *circular Ar-*
 “ *gument*, that *he who comes to GOD, must believe*
 “ *that he is*; (Pag. 78.) so I must also take *Sir Isaac*
 “ *Newton’s Principia*, after a great many other *pre-*
 “ *paratory Books*, in the Way to *that Faith*. And
 “ however the Gentlemen of the *Boylean Lecture*,
 “ on whom you so pleasantly exercise your Talent
 “ of *Raillery*, may confine their Hearers to ex-
 “ amine only into the *Evidence* on *one Side* of
 “ *the Question*; I hope you, Sir, will give me
 “ Leave to hear, what my Brethren, the *Atheists*
 “ and *Fatalists*, have said to *destroy Religion*, as well
 “ as what *its Votaries* have said in *its Defence*.”

“ Now,” may he proceed to say, “ if by some
 “ happy Conjunction of Circumstances, I have
 “ Genius and Learning, and Resolution, and Lei-
 “ sure, and Fortune enough, to go thro’ this
 “ Ency-

56 *Such Arguments as these must be answered*

“ *Encyclopædia of Ethical and Physico-Theological Studies*, it is not the Happiness of one in a thousand; and yet according to you, *Natural Religion* and *Morality* are Matters of *universal Concern*.
 “ And which is worst of all, when I have finished this Course, in some future distant Period of Life, if I happen to attain it, the *Event* of this *Examination* is quite *uncertain*. Perhaps all my Labour may be lost, and I may find myself obliged to sit down in my present *Infidelity*; or if I attain to any Notions of these Things, they may be *changeable with every Wind of Doctrine*. (Pag. 26.)
 “ Nay, if I continue to believe, my *Faith* will administer *no Comfort in the Reflection*; for I shall continually *forget* the *Fundamental Principles*, on which I have formed my Determination; (Pag. 29.) and even while I *remember* them, my *Faith* will never *influence my Practice*. (Pag. 13.) You,” may this importunate *Echo* of your Philosophy and Wisdom retort, “ you, who have studied what *Virtue* is, tell me it will require me to *deny my Appetites*, and to *bridle my Passions*: But what will *all these Principles* (even the rational Apprehensions of the Presence of God himself, a View to his Favour, and the Expectation of Immortality) do, when *weighed in the Scale* against *Demonstrative Good*, (Pag. 32.) i. e. the Pleasures of Sense, and the Ties of Secular Interest? The most valuable *Reversion* is but of *small Regard*, when compared with *that which is actually before us*. To what purpose then should I lavish away my Time, my Labour, and my Substance, to build a Vessel, which, even while you offer me the *Plan* of it, you tell me will *founder in the first Storm*, if it be not saved by *Miracle*?”

And now, Sir, arise and plead the injured Cause of GOD and of *Virtue*, against all this Train
 of

of wretched *Sophistry*; and I will venture to say, that the *Arguments*, and the *Distinctions*, by which you confute the *Atheist*, shall be *your own Answer*. You would not, for Shame, acknowledge that he reasoned justly, in a Speech like *this*, which I, or rather *yourself*, have put into his Mouth. You would not urge him, to throw up all Thoughts of the *Reasons* and *Evidences* of *Natural Religion*, and to wait “ till he be inspired in a Moment with an “ *irresistible Light from Heaven*, by which his *Faith* “ should be compleated in an *Instant*, a perfect “ *Creed* produced at once, and made *self-evident* to “ the Mind, in a Way little different from *Intuition*.” (Pag. 59.) I charitably believe, you would think the Subject *too serious* for such Kind of *Jargon*, and forgetting your *Harangue* to your *Oxonian Friend*, you would gravely inculcate very different Principles.

You would, no Doubt, shew your *Antagonist*, that he talked in a very crude and indigested Manner, and *confounded Things*, which should by all Means be carefully *distinguished*, and indeed are very easily *distinguishable*.—You would then to be sure own, and urge, that all *Mankind* are capable of some *Reasoning*, unless they be *Lunatics* or *Ideots*, who are confessedly out of the present Question; and that the great *Proofs* of *Religion* are so plain, that a few Words, and a little Time and Labour, may clear them beyond all reasonable *Objections*.—You would remind him, that *common Sense* might teach him in general to *distinguish* between what is *essential*, and what is merely *circumstantial* in an Argument, and might find out a *Medium* between being exquisitely learned in the History of *Controversies* relating to the *Deity*, and utterly unacquainted with any Reason for believing his *Existence*.—You would tell him, that the great *Author of Nature*, having given him some *Hints* of his *Being* and *Perfections*, (which the very

H

question-

58 *The Answer to them will confute the Author.*

questioning of them, or even the Denial, would prove he *in Faët* had,) might justly require, that he should seriously and candidly *weigh* at least the *most obvious Proofs*; which if he did, he would undoubtedly see *his Obligations* to *believe* and *practise* accordingly. And when he urged the *Inefficacy* of these Perswasions to *influence his Practice*, you would perhaps add, before you were well aware,—that if a *rational Creature* could commit such an Outrage upon *Reason*, as to rush on to *prohibited Gratifications*, in the apprehended Presence of God, and at the known Expence of his Favour, he must *charge* the fatal Consequence *on himself alone*; and might in the mean Time be ashamed to confess himself *so mean a Slave* to every irregular Propensity of Appetite and Passion, and to talk of *the Demonstrative Good* of those Baits, which he knew in his own Conscience to be the *Instruments of final Destruction*.

In short, Sir, not to swell *this Recapitulation*, into which I am thus accidentally fallen, to the Length *that* you have yourself given, (*Pag. 109,—III.*) I think you must *answer him* by the very *same Considerations*, which I urged in my *former Letter*, when replying to you, and by Consequence must *confute yourself*. And as one who knows the *Importance* of the Matter, and wishes nothing more sincerely than to see you extricated from these *Labyrinths of Sophistry and Error*, I do now beseech you, that you would enter into your own Conscience, while the Matter stands in this Point of Light, and ask yourself, how you could possibly on your own Principles *reply* to this *Enemy of Natural Religion*? I dare say, the Publick would be pleased to see, how you would manage the Debate. But if you could not *defend* even *Natural Religion* without *confuting yourself*, then consider how you will answer it to God and to the World, not openly to *renounce Tenets* that must be so utterly subversive of it.

You

Remark on the Author's concluding Prayer. 59

You are pleased, Sir, in one of your concluding Pages, (*pag. 112.*) to intimate your Purpose of offering up in Behalf of your young Friend “ your
“ most ardent *Prayers* at the Throne of Grace,
“ that God would illuminate and irradiate his
“ Mind with a perfect and thorough Conviction
“ of the Truth of his *holy Gospel*.” But if the *End* of
your Letter be indeed, what I find every Body I
converse with supposes it was, to overthrow what
you here call “ the *holy Gospel*,” and presently after,
“ that Divine Law dictated by the *holy Spirit* ;” I
cannot forbear saying, that such a Speech as this
would become an *Atheist* much better than a *Deist*.
It is, in that Case, so notorious an *Insult* on the
Majesty of God, and the Throne of his Grace, as
one would imagine no Creature should dare to
commit, who apprehended but a remote Possibility
that he might at length be obliged to prostrate him-
self before it, and ask the Life of his Soul there.
It would pain my Heart so much, to think you
should be capable of carrying Impiety to such a
Height, that I am sometimes ready rather to *forget*
all that looks like *Infidelity* and *Profaneness* in what
you had before written, and charitably to *hope*, tho’
against Hope, and tho’ it be perhaps at some Expence
of my Character that I should mention it, that you
are indeed a *devout*, tho’ *irrational*, *Believer* of the
Gospel, and that your Treatise is to be numbred a-
mongst the Wonders which *Enthusiasm* has wrought.
But whether you wrote this Passage in *Earnest* or in
Jest, it is with all *Seriousness* I now assure you, that
I pour out my ardent *Prayers* before the Throne
of Grace *for you* ; that by the secret Influences of
the *Blessed Spirit* on your Heart, (to whose Agency
no *Prejudices* are invincible) you may be led into a
wiser and a happier *Way of Thinking* than you seem
at present to entertain ; and that God may not
charge

charge to your Account *the Ruin of those Souls*, whom this unhappy *Pamphlet*, whatever was intended by it, has so palpable and so fatal a Tendency to destroy. Could what I have written, in either of these *Letters*, be at all subservient to the Accomplishment of *this Wish*, it would be one of the most sensible Pleasures which can ever reach the Heart of,

S I R,

Your faithful humble Servant,

Northampton,
Dec. 1. 1742.

P. DODDRIDGE.



POSTSCRIPT.

It was not till I had ended this *Second Letter*, that I heard of the *Answer* you have received from a *young Gentleman* at *Oxford*. I have not yet been able to get a Sight of it; but if, as may very probably be the Case, we have both fallen on many of the *same Things*, (as several of the Particulars I have advanced are obvious to every attentive Reader,) I conclude there must nevertheless be *something peculiar* in each; and it is very probable also, that our *Letters* may fall into different Hands. Had I met with any satisfactory *Answer* before, I should not have engaged in the Controversy; but as it is, I shall think my Pains well requited, if *you*, Sir, or the *Publick* may receive any *Benefit* from what I have written.

F I N I S.

